

SAN FRANCISCO ART ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

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LAND'S END, by William Hesthal

Reality Beyond Art

By H. Q. DRISCOLL

EDITOR'S NOTE: H. Q. Driscoll, who has written the following article for the Bulletin, is a former student of the California School of Fine Arts and the University of California, working especially with Ray Boynton in fresco and painting.

Mr. Driscoll recently returned from Europe, where for the past four years he has been studying, painting, and writing art criticism. Just prior to the outbreak of the war in Spain, Mr. Driscoll was commissioned to execute a series of murals in egg-tempera for a school in Majorca, but when hostilities began he returned to California.

SURREALISM's most recent practitioners have aroused popular interest in their work. Controversy is violent on the subject. Verbal blows have landed on all parties, delivered from all parties. San Francisco is the scene of the present phase of the battle.

Surrealism means "higher realism." That definition reminds us of Plato's idea of the Real, of Hegel's theories, and of Mussolini's concept of

an ideal State existing abstractly, but in absolute sovereignty over all lesser aspects of reality. Surrealism is identified with all religious, philosophical, political, and literary concepts which subordinate the normal human experiences to a "higher" psychic experience. It must be remembered that "Surrealism" is but the recently adopted name for an approach to experience and

(Continued on Page Five)

The Cézanne Exhibition

By DR. GRACE McCANN MORLEY

MODERN ART is already sufficiently well established to have its Old Masters. Paul Cézanne stands as the greatest of these, no matter what group individual contemporary factions may choose as their forerunners. In color he led the way to a new expression, in form he discovered the means of giving a simplified solidity and an impulse toward abstraction, in composition he inaugurated a period which is invariably conscious of the need for organization in a work of art. His failures are moving records of struggle toward perfection filled with lessons for both artist and layman. His successes realize that classic expression for which he strove and which gives to an entirely modern master the universal and enduring quality we recognize in the greatest work of every period.

Because Cézanne means all this and much more, any exhibition of his work which is at all inclusive and representative is news of importance to the art world.

The San Francisco Museum of Art is at present completing the task of gathering an *Exhibition of Paintings, Watercolors, Drawings and Prints by Paul Cézanne* for showing here from September 1st through October 4th. At first the difficulties of collecting such an exhibition in every way worthy of the artist seemed insurmountable in spite of the fact that the Crocker Collections, always so generously available to the Museum, contained a famous *Landscape* and a fine pencil drawing. After two years of careful planning, the once impossible exhibition is finally becoming a reality.

The complete list of works to be included is not yet ready at this early date. Already, however, twenty-five of the finest oils in this country have been secured. Among the important collections generously lending for the exhibition are the Metropolitan Museum, the Albright Art Gallery, the Museum of Modern Art, the Cleveland and Brooklyn Museums, the Fogg Museum, and the collections of Mr. Samuel Lewisoohn, Doctor Harry Bakwin, Mr. John Nicholas Brown, Mr. W. H. Crocker and Mrs. Edward Jonas.

Additional American collectors have yet to give a final decision, and a number of paintings will come from Europe. In addition, there will be a collection of drawings, watercolors and prints, so that the whole development of the artist may be studied.

Art School Opens August 16th

The 1937-1938 session of the California School of Fine Arts opens Monday, August 16th. The school announces with pleasure the continued engagement of Mr. Maurice Sterne as visiting instructor in figure painting and drawing for the fall semester, August 16 to December 18, 1937.

This will give advanced students a further opportunity to study with this distinguished teacher. Class every afternoon, Monday to Friday.

During July the San Francisco Museum of Art held changing exhibitions of the work of the students of the school, which has occasioned very favorable press comment.

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Important Competitions

A very important competition for stone sculpture bringing \$22,800 (to include costs) for each of two statues to decorate a government building in Washington has just been announced by the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department. Further information may be obtained by writing there or in the last Bulletin of the Treasury Department on file in the library of the San Francisco Museum of Art.

A competition for postage stamp designs closing September 15 and paying \$500 for first, \$300 for second, and \$200 for third selection is also announced. It is to be of George Washington's portrait—the first of a "Presidential Series." For further information apply San Francisco Museum of Art.

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Portland Museum Invites Artists

The following is the prospectus of the Sixth Annual Exhibition to be held at the Portland Art Museum from October 21 to November 21 of this year.

Entry blanks must be returned to the Museum by October 1.

The exhibition will consist of painting and sculpture only.

Works must be delivered prepaid at the Museum between October 1 and 7.

Works will be received from any point in the United States by prepaid express, and will be returned by the Museum without charge if *accepted by the jury*.

Nothing previously shown in Portland will be accepted.

The Museum will offer this year for the first time three prizes. The first prize will be \$100, the second \$50, and the third \$25.



JACK WILKINSON, Winner of the James D. Phelan Traveling Scholarship.

Phelan Scholarship Awarded

Award of the \$2,000 James D. Phelan Traveling Scholarship, coveted honor of the California School of Fine Arts, has been made to Jack Wilkinson, 23-year-old student, who plans to leave for Europe at the close of this year.

Wilkinson, a painter, first became interested in art when he took drawing courses at the University of Oregon in order to illustrate a column in the college paper. He finally devoted himself entirely to courses in the art department, became staff artist at a CCC camp, and eventually arrived at the school.

At present, Wilkinson is assisting Maurice Sterne, whose murals for the Treasury Department are now being executed.

The Phelan Traveling Scholarship Award of \$2,000 is limited to past and present students of the California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco, who have completed two consecutive years of study, and who are under 30 years of age. Provision was made for this scholarship under the terms of the bequest left the San Francisco Art Association by the late Senator James D. Phelan.

This is the second time that the Phelan Scholarship has been awarded.

Miss Helen Phillips, who received the prize last year, is now in Paris.

Water Color Jury Chosen

Following is the result of the election for members of the juries for the San Francisco Art Association Water Color Show to be held at the San Francisco Museum of Art from November 2 to November 30, 1937:

Jury of Selection—John Haley, George Post, Anne Bailhache, Glenn Wessels, Hamilton Wolf. Alternates—Dong Kingman, Edith Hamlin.

Jury of Awards—Victor Arnautoff, Ben Cunningham, John Haley. Alternates—Anne Bailhache, George Post.

New Members

Lay—Mrs. Andrew M. Cole.

Active Artist—Mrs. Gertrude Wiebe Mihsfeldt, Mr. Y. Okamoto, Mr. Yoshida Sekido.

Associate Artist—Mrs. Gordena Parker Jackson, Mrs. Ruth Gray, Miss Edith Adams, Miss Mime Okubo, Mr. Ralph W. Powell, Miss Avis Zeidler.

An exhibition of Fantastic Art, Dada, and Surrealism, circulated by the Museum of Modern Art, New York, is now on display at the San Francisco Museum of Art.

San Francisco Art Association Bulletin

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Artists' Digest Fills Need

THE BULLETIN congratulates the Artists' Council on the distribution of its "Artists' Digest," the first edition of which was recently issued. Sent to artist members of the Association, it gives a summary of the Council's business during the three months that it covers, and should be the means of keeping the artists abreast of Council activities.

There is scarcely a Council meeting without suggestions or protests being received from artists in the form of verbal messages or written communications. Many are valuable, but often touch upon the very problems under consideration by the Council but not fully matured. We hope that the artists of the Association will read the "Digest" carefully so that they may become as well informed of the Association's affairs as the members of the Council who are elected to serve as their representatives.

* * *

The Art Association's fall season opens with the Graphic Arts Show at the San Francisco Museum of Art, preview of which will be held on the evening of August 16th. The response to this show was most gratifying, between 500 and 600 entries being received, of which 148 pieces, representing the work of 100 artists, will be hung.

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Voting by mail has been established beyond all doubt as the logical way to conduct this part of the Association's business. About three times the usual number of votes were cast for the Water Color Jury, which appears on page three of THE BULLETIN.

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A meeting of the Artist Members of the Art Association has been scheduled for Friday, August 27, at 8 p. m., in the California School of Fine Arts. Discussion will center around two reports: *The Art Association Room* at the Museum, by Chairman Julius Pommer, and *Wage Scale for Artists*, by Chairman Ben Cunningham. The meeting will also serve to welcome new members of the Art Association.

Art for Our Sake

By CHARLES W. FERGUSON

Excerpts from Mr. Ferguson's "Art for Our Sake", copyrighted by Harper & Bros., 1937, are reproduced as a timely contribution to this month's discussion of Surrealism.

NOW THAT the surrealist and dada exhibit has made the rounds, it is time to speak plainly of the sad estate to which the national mind seems in imminent danger of falling. For the fact which bludgeons one who confronts surrealism and allied whimsies is not that men will paint such pictures and fashion such objects, but that the common fellow of our time, holding no passion for art and less for the abstract, should patronize the transcontinental jaunt of the exhibit and, if not exactly genuflect, at least confess upon emerging from the menage of phantasmagoric objects that he has been touched.

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Thus the incomprehensible has acquired followers and the revolt against meaning is in full cry. While this fact is essentially funny, it is likewise important. No matter how much one smiles at the spectacle of men enthralled by tent mysteries, one must not miss the point: the confusion, mental and emotional, of the average person has become so pronounced and terrifying that he seeks outside support and validation of it. Confronting an unassimilable body of facts, the modern mind retreats comfortably into gibberish, substitutes an entertaining brand of madness for effort, and is delighted to find that its mistakes can be dignified by the term art.

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The same kind of performance goes on apace today in the realm of dissonant music, unpunctuated and occult verse, stream-of-unconsciousness novels. A not inconsiderable crowd of those whose high business it is to interpret the impulses and emotions of our times have seen fit to do so in terms of studied nonsense. Indeed, deference for the meaningless has even found its way into modern education, so that when a child draws a picture of a frog and it resembles a tumor, it is not good form to chide the child. It's a frog to him and it behooves you to see it as he does. There is no longer any simple conviction that a frog is a frog.

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The artist of course ought to occupy a singular position—one not far removed from the priest. It is his function, though he seldom admits it, to reveal what is significant and to play into obscurity what is not. That is why it seems to me that the more cockeyed forms of modern art do us common people such a profound disservice. We know well enough that the life we lead every day tends to become distracted. We

(Continued on Page Five)

Reality Beyond Art

(Continued from Page One)

expression which has been followed, off and on, all through mankind's history. Everyone has Surrealistic experiences. Many people tell of such experiences. In order to tell of those experiences, they exploit the facilities already provided by the forms of expression which were designed for the telling of ordinary nonpsychic experiences. Some of those forms are literary, such as the poetic form, the dramatic form, the novel form, the short-story form, etc. Other forms are musical, such as the symphony, the tone-poem, the opera, etc. Others are art forms, such as sculpture, drawing, painting, etc.

Surrealists have exploited all such forms of expression for their own very special psychological purposes. But they know that their validity as Surrealists will be undermined if they allow any esthetic considerations to enter into their use of those forms. The Surrealistic experience, they assert, is of the first importance. It must be expressed with absolute fidelity or lose its special claims. The Surrealists, therefore, are forced to reject all the traditional rules of procedure in the use of any particular form of expression. They must express themselves, but what forms of expression exist other than those which were devised long ago for non-Surrealistic purposes? None. "Very well," the Surrealists say, "we will use the already established forms, but we will use them as we see fit."

The conflict and confusion which results from this attitude are inevitable. Inevitable, that is, unless we take the Surrealists at their own estimation and draw the line where they draw it. A Surrealist painter, for example, uses canvas, paints, brushes and all the rest of the paraphernalia used by other painters. But is the Surrealist painter an artist? Does he create art? Is there such a thing as Surrealist art?

If we answer that question reasonably, we avoid confusion and conflict and, incidentally, we make Surrealism a far more valid and interesting thing than it is today in its present false position.

The logic of Surrealism is based on Freud's theory of the unconscious. Surrealist experience is dream-experience. Surrealist expression is what might be called "dream-describing." The conscious mind is prevented, in so far as possible, from entering into this expression. Rational processes, in other words, are scrupulously avoided. Now, art processes are always rational processes. Art is based on selection and rejection of all kinds of possible art elements by the artist's mind. This is the process which results in a work of art. No other process, presumably, can achieve the same results except by accident (as in drawings by children). When the Surrealist

painter attempts to use this rational process of selection and rejection, he immediately ceases to be faithful to his Surrealistic experience. He distorts the vision and thus destroys its psychic meaning and singularity. We realize at once that "Surrealist art" is a contradiction in itself. Surrealism cannot be art and art cannot be Surrealistic. The most we can say is that Surrealists and artists make use of the same means to achieve entirely unrelated ends.

Even though we are forced to consider Surrealist paintings only as strictly psychological documentation, we must admit that they are often fascinating objects. (It can be asserted truthfully that they are the only easel paintings which justify a continuation, today, of that particular form of expression.) They require no study or understanding. Being perfectly representative and pictorial, there is nothing abstract about them. The actual technique in which they are painted is usually amazingly clean and precise. Their sole appeal is to the emotions, but often to those deep-moving emotions of which we have never allowed ourselves to be aware. Surrealism may reveal to you the beauty of your own irrational, unconscious self. That is the avowed purpose of Surrealism. That is why it claims to be important—more important than anything else in life. The Surrealists say, in fact, that only Surrealism can make man joyful and hopeful because it alone can save him from the curse of his own rational stupidity and stupid rationalism.

Art for Our Sake

(Continued from Page Four)

have reason to expect from the artist some god-like resolution of order out of chaos. We may at moments be grateful if he reveals mercilessly the contents of our minds. He may even do good deeds with this method, giving body to the abstract. In the main, though, the artist needs (as we need) to select, not to choose willy-nilly from the garbled contents of our daily ash heap. These dadaists and the frightful imps who slavishly follow their lack of pattern teach us indiscriminateness, a feeling that one thing is as good as another and that the aggregate is appalling.

In a world less distraught there would be less cause to regret that the artist is inclined to forsake his last.

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And the great pity of this is that now more than ever the arts are the property of us all. For the first time they are in a position to serve as evangels of perfection touching millions that they have not touched before. Hence the high importance and obligation of those who give art expression.

SAN FRANCISCO ART ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

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Current Exhibitions in Local Galleries

Amberg-Hirth, 165 Post street: Modern applied arts.

Courvoisier Galleries, 133 Geary street: Old Master drawings (Robert Lebel Collection) through August 21. Modern French painting, opening August 21.

S. and G. Gump, 246 Post street: Painting by California artists, early and contemporary, August 15 to September 1. General exhibition of paintings and prints, September 1 to 15. Oils by Henry Alexander, early California painter of still-lives, interiors, and figures, opening September 20.

M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, Golden Gate Park: Photography, 1839-1937, from the Museum of Modern Art, through August 29. One Hundred Contemporary American Prints, through August 31. Pastels by David Abbey Paige, opening August 16. (Official artist for color research on scientific staff with Second Byrd Antarctic Expedition.) Exhibitions for Children: Toys of the 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries, from the collection of Mrs. A. T. Chick. Creative Art Work by children in San Francisco hospitals and community centers under the direction of Miss Mary Dakin of the Federal Art Project, through August 15.

California Palace of the Legion of Honor, Lincoln Park: Old Master paintings, from the collection of Mr. E. John Magnin, New York, through August. "The California Group" (water colors), through August 15. Group exhibition of paintings by Henrietta Hoopes, Buckley MacGurrian, Nathalie Newking and Etienne Ret, opening August 1. Treasury Department Art Projects exhibition, opening August 16.

San Francisco Museum of Art

August Lecture Schedule

August 15—Sunday afternoon, 3 p. m.—*Surrealist Art*. Charles Lindstrom.

August 18—Wednesday evening, 8 p. m.—Art Book Review: "*Understanding Prints*," by Kistler. Miriam Sweeney.

August 22—Sunday afternoon, 3 p. m.—*Cézanne and Early 20th Century Painting*. Claudia Davis.

August 25—Wednesday evening, 8 p. m.—*Tour of the Chinese Statuettes*. Alice Putnam Breuer.

August 29—Sunday afternoon, 3 p. m.—*Chinese Styles*. Alfred Salmony.

Exhibitions in August

Fantastic Art, Dada and Surrealism—Organized by the Museum of Modern Art, August 6 through August 31.

San Francisco Art Association Exhibition of Drawings and Prints—August 17 to September 19.

Chinese Tomb Statuettes—Through August 30.

Exhibition of Work by Students of the California School of Fine Arts—Through August 15.

Paintings and Sculpture by the Sawkill Group—Through August 15.

Coming Exhibitions

Paul Cézanne—September 1 to October 4.